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ABSTRACT

Designed to inform administrative and teaching staff at Quebec's colleges of the Commission d'evaluation de l'enseignement collegial's (CEEC's) procedure for evaluating programs of study, this report provides information on the CEEC's approach and the colleges' role, and expands on previous guidelines issued by the CEEC. Following a brief introduction, chapter 1 summarizes the CEEC's approach and outlines the following steps in the program evaluation process: an advisory body is formed to identify issues, prepare unique evaluation guides for individual programs, and develop evaluation tools; the college conducts a self-evaluation of the program in question; the CEEC analyzes the self-evaluation report and visits the college; and the CEEC rules on the program and provides recommendations. Chapter 2 offers suggestions on organizing college self-evaluations and details the following criteria for programs: (1) program relevance; (2) program coherence; (3) the value of teaching methods and student supervision; (4) appropriateness of human, material, and financial resources; (5) program effectiveness; and (6) quality of program management. This chapter also provides a model self-evaluation report. Chapter 3 explains the college visit and its objectives, indicating that it should last between 1 to 3 days depending upon the scope of the program and evaluation. Finally, chapter 4 reviews the CEEC's evaluation report and describes the range of findings, from satisfactory to partially satisfactory to unsatisfactory. (KP)

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ED 370 645

General Guide to the Evaluation of Programs of Studies by the Commission d'évaluation de l'enscignement collégial

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COMMISSION D'ÉVALUATION
DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT COLLÉGIAL

Québec

General Guide to the Evaluation of Programs of Studies by the Commission d'évaluation de l'enseignement collégial

2410-0509

May 1994

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Introduction

In the general guidelines for evaluating programs of study, which it published and distributed to all college-level institutions[1], the Commission outlined its program evaluation approach and criteria. These guidelines initiated the dialogue the Commission intends to pursue with the colleges throughout the evaluation process.

The present *General Guide* falls within this context, and aims primarily to inform college administrative and teaching staff of the Commission's procedure for evaluating programs of study. It includes information on the Commission's approach as well as the colleges' role, especially in the self-evaluation of their programs, and expands on the evaluation criteria introduced in the guidelines by asking questions which should enable the colleges and the Commission to evaluate programs in depth.

The guide was based on the components of the college education renewal slated for August 1994. However, the Commission intends to evaluate programs without waiting for the full implementation of the new *College Education Regulations*. By beginning immediately, it hopes to contribute to the quick improvement and better definition of programs, gradually instituting a tradition of evaluation which is imperative now that the colleges are assuming greater responsibility for developing their educational activities. Naturally, the Commission will evaluate programs of study based on their characteristics and status at the time of evaluation, and will have to adapt this guide to that context. As a result, initially, only certain criteria may be used to evaluate a given program.

Consequently, **in addition to this general guide, the Commission will prepare and distribute individual evaluation guides adapted to the specific characteristics of each program it has chosen to evaluate.** In these individual guides, the Commission will specify the criteria and sub-criteria--from among those contained in this general guide--used to evaluate a given program, as well as questions which should permit an in-depth study of it.

This general guide is thus designed to inform colleges of the Commission's evaluation process and the role they will be called to play. The Commission thereby hopes to

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1. Commission d'évaluation de l'enseignement collégial, *Evaluating Programs of Studies. General Guidelines*, Québec City, Gouvernement du Québec, January 1994, 15 p.

encourage them to formulate and implement the mechanisms they will require to conduct a self-evaluation of their programs of study.[2]

The guide is divided into four chapters. Chapter 1 summarizes the Commission's approach and briefly outlines the steps in the program evaluation process. Chapter 2 offers suggestions on how to organize self-evaluation within the college, presents the criteria and questions to be used to evaluate the various aspects of a program of study, and includes a standard self-evaluation report model. Chapter 3 explains the college visit and its objectives, and Chapter 4 deals with the Commission's evaluation report and provides an overview of the nature of its decisions.

2. The guide may also be useful to colleges in formulating their own program evaluation policy.

Chapter 1
The Commission's Approach

The Commission de l'évaluation de l'enseignement collégial evaluates programs of study with the twofold objective of helping institutions constantly improve the quality and relevance of the education they offer, and reporting on the value of the instruction their students receive. To meet the first objective, the Commission opted for an approach focusing on the formative component of evaluation, which led it to propose procedures in which the colleges play an active role. The Commission will ask the colleges to first conduct a self-evaluation of their programs of study based on a guide it will provide. It will also call on recognized independent specialists to assess the self-evaluation, hold discussions with the institution, and reach a decision on the program's value. The active participation of these two categories of interests is essential to the successful evaluation of the programs of study, and is consistent with higher education evaluation practices used widely in industrialized countries.

Self-evaluation of study programs by those most closely involved in their immediate implementation raises important facts and observations rooted in their individual experiences and the features specific to their teaching environment, thereby enriching the Commission's evaluations. Self-evaluation also enables the college to re-examine how its program functions and the results it offers, identify opportunities for improvement, and adopt appropriate measures. In this sense, self-evaluation is formative, making it easier to gradually instil a tradition of evaluation within the college network.

Consultation with independent outside specialists reinforces program evaluation. It makes the procedure more objective and ensures that all programs are assessed fairly, enabling the Commission to make valid decisions and thereby meet its second objective. Some of these specialists belong to the college community and include teachers, professionals, and program coordinators acting impartially and recognized in the discipline of the program being evaluated. This peer group is supplemented by people from specific socioeconomic milieux or the university community, depending on the program, to broaden the evaluation perspective and situate it in regard to society. These specialists comprise an advisory body, chaired by a commissioner, which assists the Commission throughout the evaluation process. The Commission asks for the suggestions and cooperation of the colleges, as well as other interested partners, to constitute the advisory body for the evaluation of each program.

As indicated above, the Commission will provide individual program evaluation guides. Based on the general guide, they will contain all information required for program evaluation: criteria and sub-criteria, questions designed to facilitate evaluation, the procedure to follow to describe the program in detail, supporting documents required, etc. The individual evaluation guides reflect how program objectives are defined and the context in which programs are implemented. To ensure fairness, the individual guides are the same for all colleges offering a given program.

Since a program of study is defined as "an organized set of learning activities leading to the achievement of educational objectives based on set standards,[3]" the Commission generally makes a point of evaluating all component elements. Consequently, the general education component and the specific program component will be evaluated together.

Given the work required to prepare individual evaluation guides and the need for specialists to be present, the Commission will evaluate a given program of study simultaneously in all colleges offering it. Concurrently, it will evaluate the program leading to the diploma of college studies (DEC), and related programs leading to the attestation of college studies (AEC). This should give the Commission an idea of the state of these programs within the college network and, where applicable, allow it to draw conclusions and make appropriate recommendations.

The Commission will also take advantage of the program evaluation process to assess how colleges apply their institutional student achievement and program evaluation policies.

The Program Evaluation Procedure

Program evaluation is conducted in four steps.

During **Step 1**, the Commission forms an advisory body which helps it identify the issues, challenges and choices involved, prepare individual evaluation guides and, where applicable, develop program evaluation tools.

On receiving the individual evaluation guide, the college conducts its self-evaluation of the program in question, constituting **Step 2** in the process. Detailed examples of evaluation questions are given in the Chapter 2.

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3. *College Education Regulations*, Section 1.

During **Step 3**, the Commission, in conjunction with the advisory body, analyzes the self-evaluation report and visits the college.

During **Step 4**, the Commission rules on the program and, where applicable, formulates recommendations. It writes a preliminary program evaluation report and asks for the college's input before publishing the final version.

Steps 2 to 4 are explained below.

Chapter 2
Self-Evaluation of the Program

Program self-evaluation is the purview of the college's administrative staff, which organizes and conducts its assessment according to the terms and conditions it deems appropriate. However, given colleges' varying levels of experience in this area, the Commission feels it would be useful to make suggestions which may facilitate the self-evaluation procedure and ensure that equivalent tools are developed.

In this chapter, the Commission introduces the self-evaluation process, and makes *suggestions* on how to organize it, encourage the participation of interested partners, and compile the self-evaluation report which the college must submit to the Commission.

1. Organizing the Self-Evaluation Process

The college's self-evaluation is generally conducted within four months.[4]

The self-evaluation kit

The Commission forwards the program-specific self-evaluation kit to college administrators. This kit includes :

- the individual evaluation guide for the program, which contains questions designed to help the college conduct the self-evaluation (the following pages contain examples of such questions);
- where applicable, data-gathering tools developed by the Commission;
- program data exclusive to the Commission.

4. If the scope of the program to be evaluated and the evaluation itself so warrant, this period may be extended, especially for the first evaluations.

Local or regional information meetings may be organized to explain the Commission's expectations for the self-evaluation and to inform participants of the Commission's own evaluation procedure. Interested institutions should contact the Commission's research officer, who liaises with the college.

The self-evaluation committee

The success of the self-evaluation procedure depends largely on the active support of the college administration and the cooperation of college staff, especially teachers. Experience shows that to facilitate the process, the college should form a self-evaluation committee mandated principally to coordinate the evaluation process, encourage the participation of those affected by the implementation of the program, and write the evaluation report. Generally, this committee would comprise representatives from the main groups involved: teachers, students, and administrators.

The usefulness of the self-evaluation depends both on how methodically it is conducted and how extensively it confers with those most directly concerned. While various groups must be consulted, it is particularly important to get the opinions of those involved directly in program implementation, i.e. teachers, college administrators, the non-teaching staff, and students enrolled in the program.

Depending on the criteria used, it may also be important to solicit the viewpoints of past students (whether they graduated or not), and of their employers or university professors. The statements of representatives of these groups may add credibility and depth to the self-evaluation.

Each college is responsible for defining the terms and conditions governing such consultation and ensuring that it has the tools required to carry it out, although the Commission may provide the latter.

Self-evaluation data

The colleges are asked to provide a factual, in-depth description of the various aspects of the program and to base their evaluation and conclusions on credible, verifiable data and documents (quantitative data, survey reports, proceedings, course outlines, examinations, etc.). Obviously, the calibre of the self-evaluation will depend on the accuracy of program status information and on the quality of the assessment conducted by the college.

The Commission generally notifies the colleges a year in advance that it intends to evaluate a given program in order to give them time to gather data. The Commission feels that program data, opinions and satisfaction rating especially of past students, employers and the university community, should be accumulated regularly and systematically and become an integral part of the colleges' approach to program management. Such a practice would reinforce the *Institutional policy on program evaluation* and the self-evaluation procedure.

2. Evaluation Criteria and Questions

The Commission will evaluate programs of study based on the following six criteria :

- program relevance;
- program coherence;
- the value of teaching methods and student supervision;
- appropriateness of human, material, and financial resources;
- program effectiveness;
- the quality of program management.

In the pages that follow, the Commission sets out the evaluation criteria and sub-criteria. In their self-evaluation, the colleges use these sub-criteria as points of reference to compare the actual status of the program at the time of evaluation. Each sub-criterion includes a series of **evaluation questions**, designed to orient the evaluation process and help the colleges properly assess the status of their program in this area.

The importance the Commission attaches to each criterion and sub-criterion may vary considerably from program to program. It may also depend on the context in which the self-evaluation is carried out. Also, although the Commission feels that all the criteria and sub-criteria set out in this document allow for in-depth program evaluation, it does not intend to use each and every one whenever an evaluation is carried out. Nonetheless, it has listed them all to clarify its approach and the topics which may be dealt with in the course of its evaluations. It hopes that they will prove useful to the colleges in formulating their own evaluation tools.

In the individual program evaluation guides, the Commission sets out self-evaluation criteria and sub-criteria. These guides take into account specific program characteristics and the circumstances under which a given program of studies is implemented. They also take into account the objectives as they are defined. Criteria, sub-criteria, and evaluation

questions are selected and adapted based on program specifics. The guides also contain a list of the data and documents to be included with the evaluation report, i.e. proceedings, course outlines, and questionnaires.

Criterion 1
Program relevance

This criterion links program objectives with educational/socioeconomic requirements, i.e. the needs and expectations of society, the university community, the labour market, and students. For practical reasons, the link between the program as defined (objectives, standards and content), and needs, as well as how it influences graduate success in university and on the job market, are examined all together.

The Commission will not formally evaluate the relevance of the objectives and standards of programs of study leading to a DEC. However, without intending to usurp the role of the ministerial authorities responsible for evaluating the relevance of these programs, the Commission plans to get feedback from the colleges in order to submit to the Minister, if necessary, recommendations likely to increase the relevance of these programs. Since evaluation of the relevance of programs of study leading to an AEC falls within the Commission's mandate, the following sub-criteria apply, with the exception of those targeting the university community.

Sub-criterion 1.1	**The objectives, standards and content of the program of study are consistent with the expectations and needs of the labour market or the university community.**
Evaluation questions	How does the college measure these needs and expectations? What contacts has it established with employers and universities? Are these contacts ongoing?
	What was the university success rate of the college's graduates over the past three years? How does it compare with the success rate of graduates from other programs or with the average success rate of graduates from other colleges?
	What was the employment rate of graduates in program-related jobs over the past three years? How does it compare with overall statistics for graduates from this program?

Has the college changed its program based on input from employers or universities, or a study of its graduates' employment and success rates?

In its current form, does the program appear to meet the needs of employers and universities? Does the college plan to make changes to it?

Does the college have any comments on program objectives, standards and content as set out by the Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec?

Sub-criterion 1.2 **The objectives, standards and content of the program of study are consistent with society's overall expectations.**

Evaluation questions

Has the college studied society's overall expectations as they relate to its graduates? Has it expressed its conclusions in writing, i.e. in an educational project? Are they reflected in the program?

When formulating the program, did the college ensure that it helped develop skills enabling graduates to assume their role in society, for instance a critical mind, social skills, the ability to communicate, openness to diversity, and the ability to adapt?

Has the college evaluated student achievement in relation to these and other more general skills? How was this evaluation carried out?

Has the college adapted its program to make it more effective in this regard? Does it plan to do so?

Sub-criterion 1.3 **The objectives, standards and content of the program of study are consistent with student expectations.**

Evaluation questions

What measures has the college taken to ascertain student expectations for the program?

What changes, if any, have been made to the program to reflect these expectations?

Has the college taken steps to meet the specific needs or expectations of certain groups of students, i.e. those whose mother tongue is

neither French nor English or whose educational background is lacking in certain areas?

Do program objectives, standards and content appear to meet students' expectations? What is this conclusion based on? Does the college plan to make any changes to the program?

Criterion 2
Program coherence

Since a program of study is an education plan, its component elements must be highly coherent. A top-quality program should set out clear objectives and include relevant interrelated learning activities to meet them.

Sub-criterion 2.1 — **Program objectives clearly describe the skills students must acquire; program standards establish the degree to which these skills must be mastered at the college level.**

Evaluation questions

Are program objectives and standards clear and explicit enough to prevent errors in interpretation? What has the college done to ensure this?

Sub-criterion 2.2 — **The program contains a series of general and specialized education learning activities, whose specific objectives and content are clearly defined and consistent with program standards and objectives; these learning activities ensure that program standards and objectives are met.**

Evaluation questions

How has the college ensured that all program objectives are considered when formulating learning activities?

What means allow the college to verify that the specific objectives and content of each learning activity help meet program standards and objectives?

According to the college assessment, to what extent do the objectives and content of each learning activity are compatible with the objectives and standards of the program's general and specific education components? Does it plan to make any changes?

Sub-criterion 2.3	**Learning activities are ordered logically and sequenced so as to facilitate progressively more detailed study and integration of the various program content elements.**
Evaluation questions	To what extent are learning activities sequenced and developed progressively based on program objectives? Do any of them constitute obstacles for students? How do these activities ensure that a balance exists between the various program aspects, that these aspects are progressively studied in greater depth, and that program content is integrated effectively? Can they be improved?
Sub-criterion 2.4	**Specific requirements for each learning activity (courses, laboratories, individual projects) are realistic and clearly defined; these requirements are accurately reflected in course outlines and the weighting and calculation of credits.**
Evaluation questions	Based on the workload which can be considered normal for a college student, has the college succeeded in realistically establishing the requirements for each learning activity, and taking them into account in the weighting and calculation of credits? How are these requirements reflected in each course outline? Is the college satisfied with this situation? Does it plan to make changes?

Criterion 3
The value of teaching methods and student supervision

Teaching methods are a series of instructional approaches combined to achieve program objectives. As a whole, they correspond to program objectives, are compatible with the characteristics marking the student population, and require qualified staff. Two types of decisions are involved in choosing teaching methods: general decisions regarding the relative importance attached to program components such as training sessions, laboratories, or work/study alternation; and specific educational decisions which apply to each individual learning activity. Normally, the former require the interaction of those

responsible for local program implementation, while the latter fall to the teachers assigned to each learning activity.

Supervision refers to special assistance provided to help students meet program objectives over and above regular classroom teaching duties.

Adapting teaching methods to program objectives, learning activities, and the specific student population is critical to program quality, as is having the college and college staff provide individual assistance to students (such assistance often makes the difference between success and failure).

Sub-criterion 3.1	**Teaching methods are adapted to program and learning activity objectives, and take student characteristics into account in order to help students achieve these objectives based on established standards.**
Evaluation questions	How did the college determine the relative importance of instructional formulas such as training sessions, laboratories and, where applicable, work/study alternation? Does a consensus exist among the main players concerned (teachers and administrative staff)?
	How are the teaching methods for each of the program's learning activities chosen? Does a consensus exist among teachers? How does the college evaluate the results of the teaching methods chosen and make the necessary adjustments? What is the college's overall assessment of the effectiveness of the teaching methods used in the program in question? Does it plan to make changes?
Sub-criterion 3.2	**Measures are designed to detect learning problems and provide guidance, support and follow-up to enhance student success.**
Evaluation questions	Which screening, support and follow-up services are available to students with learning problems to help them overcome these problems and successfully complete their college studies? Which services are provided to students with no specific learning problems to encourage them to persevere and complete their studies?
	How does the college measure the impact and effectiveness of these services?

What is the impact of such services on the admission, retention, and success rates of students in the program? Can they be improved?

Sub-criterion 3.3 **Teachers are available to meet students' need for supervision.**

Evaluation questions

How does the college ensure that teachers are available to students during scheduled classroom hours?

How does the college ensure that teachers are available to students outside of scheduled classroom hours?

Can students convey their satisfaction or dissatisfaction concerning teacher availability? How?

If the current situation is not satisfactory in this regard, what changes does the college plan to make to remedy it?

Criterion 4
The appropriateness of human, material, and financial resources

Program quality depends largely on the human, material and financial resources allocated to it. Without motivated, competent teachers, efficient support staff, or sufficient high-quality material resources, it is virtually impossible to offer a quality education.

Sub-criterion 4.1 **The number and quality of teachers are sufficient and their areas of expertise are diversified enough to meet program and learning activity objectives.**

Evaluation questions

To what extent do teachers' number, quality and areas of expertise allow program and learning activity objectives to be met?

How do teacher hiring, assignment, and supervision help meet program objectives? Can they be improved?

Sub-criterion 4.2	**There are enough professional and support staff to meet program needs.**
Evaluation questions	Is the professional and support staff (librarians, teaching assistants, technicians, maintenance personnel, etc.) sufficient, available, and qualified to meet program needs?
Sub-criterion 4.3	**The motivation and competence of teachers and other college staff are maintained and developed, among other things, through well-defined evaluation procedures and professional development activities.**
Evaluation questions	What type of evaluation procedures and professional development activities already exist? What is their impact on the teaching staff and on the program? What is the teachers' level of involvement in **activities other** than classroom teaching (participation in institutional committees, educational research, etc.)? Is involvement encouraged by the college? How? What is the status of professional contacts between teachers and their colleagues from other milieux? How are these contacts encouraged by the college? Do recognition and incentive measures targeting education and teacher quality exist? What is their extent and scope? Is the college satisfied with its staff's motivation and competence? Does it envisage new measures to stimulate motivation and develop competence?
Sub-criterion 4.4	**The quantity, quality, and accessibility of classrooms, equipment and other material resources are appropriate.**
Evaluation questions	In what state are the various material resources assigned to the program (classrooms and laboratories, technical and computer equipment, libraries, etc.) in terms of quantity, quality, accessibility, upkeep, and renewal? Which needs have not been met? What are the development priorities in this area?

Sub-criterion 4.5	**Financial resources are sufficient to ensure that the program functions properly.**
Evaluation questions	How do the financial resources available ensure that the program functions properly? Are the program's essential needs being met?

Criterion 5
Program effectiveness

This criterion is particularly important in any program evaluation, since it addresses the extent to which program objectives are met. It helps determine whether a program produces the short-term results anticipated, i.e. whether, by the end of their college studies, students have achieved the skill level targeted by the program.

Sub-criterion 5.1	**Recruitment, selection and integration measures allow the college to constitute a student population capable of successfully completing the program.**
Evaluation questions	How does the college recruit and, if applicable, select its students? How does it evaluate their potential for success?
	Has the college developed reception and integration measures for its new students? Has it formulated specific measures for high-risk students? Does it intend to do so?
	How do the college's recruitment, selection, integration, and student grouping practices affect the program's success rate? Should they be changed?
Sub-criterion 5.2	**The methods and tools used to evaluate student learning applied in the program allow the college to determine how effectively program and learning activity objectives have been met.**
Evaluation questions	Do the evaluation methods and tools used allow the college to determine to what extent program objectives have been met? Do they respect existing standards?
	How does the college ensure that these methods and tools are used uniformly by different teachers giving the same course?

Does the college feel that applying its *Policy on the evaluation of student learning* to the program guarantees a fair assessment of student learning? Are any changes planned?

Sub-criterion 5.3 **The course success rate is satisfactory and compares favourably with that of other programs of study and other institutions.**

Evaluation questions

What trends have been observed in success rates for courses within the program, especially those offered in first term? Do these rates compare favourably to those for other programs in the college or similar programs offered elsewhere?

In recent years, what has the college done to improve this success rate? With what results? Does it plan to take other measures?

Sub-criterion 5.4 **An acceptable proportion of students complete the program within a time frame that is tolerable given their student status (full-time or part-time) and personal characteristics.**

Evaluation questions

Taking into account their status and personal characteristics, what proportion of students have completed their studies within the normal time frame in recent years? How does this compare with other colleges? What is the college's assessment of the situation?

Sub-criterion 5.5 **Graduates meet the established skills acquisition standards targeted by the program.**

Evaluation questions

To what extent do graduates meet program standards and objectives? How does the college determine whether the skills levels targeted have been reached?

To what extent does the comprehensive test administered by the college show that students who complete the program meet established standards governing the acquisition of the skills targeted by the program?

Has the college developed means to ensure that its comprehensive test is equivalent in calibre to that of other colleges?

Criterion 6
The quality of program management

The Commission feels that program quality also hinges on prudent management methods capable of fostering joint action among those involved in program implementation. The management methods adopted must help formulate, plan, offer and evaluate instruction in keeping with the program of study as a whole as defined in section 1 of the *College Education Regulations*, i.e. "an organized set of learning activities leading to the achievement of educational objectives based on set standards."

Sub-criterion 6.1

Management methods and structures and the existing means of communication are well- defined and promote the program's proper functioning as well as the program approach.

Evaluation questions

Who is responsible for the various aspects of program management (planning, organization, administration, and evaluation)? How are they carried out?

Has the college appointed someone to be responsible for the program? On a full-time or part-time basis? What authority does this person have over the teachers and professional and support staff involved in the program? What support does the college administration provide?

Does a program committee exist? What is its relationship with the administration? With the departments? How does it carry out its duties on a day-to-day basis?

Does the college feel that program management structures are adequate? Does it plan to change them?

Sub-criterion 6.2

Clear procedures allow for ongoing evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the program and its learning activities based on reliable qualitative and quantitative data.

Evaluation questions

What means has the college adopted to evaluate and monitor the program? Does it have an institutional program evaluation policy?

How have these methods, especially the program evaluation policy, proven effective and tailored to program characteristics? Did they had to modifications of the program?

	Are the existing means suitable? Does the college plan to change them?
Sub-criterion 6.3	**Program descriptions are distributed and explained to both students and teachers.**
Evaluation questions	How does the college ensure that both students and teachers are aware of and understand the program's fundamental characteristics (objectives, standards, and structure)?

3. The Program Self-Evaluation Report

Ideally, the college prepares its self-evaluation referring to the model prepared by the Commission and shown below. After the report has been approved by the board of directors, it is forwarded to the Commission within the deadlines prescribed. The self-evaluation report is used as a reference for the college visit, and constitutes a key supporting document in the Commission's decision.

Self-evaluation report model

1) Approach

The college describes its approach to self-evaluation by outlining its organizational plan, responsibility-sharing formula, collaborators and, where applicable, consultations carried out with teachers, students, employers, and the university community. It also specifies how its conclusions were reached.

2) Program description

In a few pages, the college provides a brief, factual description of the program being evaluated, highlighting the following specifics related to its implementation:

- a program history and the initial and current rationale for offering it;
- changes in the student population over the last five years;
- composition of the faculty over the last five years;

- program choices, challenges and outlook for the future.

3) Results

Based on the program evaluation procedure proposed, the college answers the questions asked, provides the supporting documents on which its evaluation is based, and includes any remarks or comments deemed appropriate. It is also encouraged to tie its conclusions on how the program functions into each evaluation criterion by grouping its answers to the related sub-criteria.

4) Appendices

The college submits relevant statistical and factual data in an appendix. In a separate appendix, it also lists the required supporting documents.

Supporting documents required by the Commission

To elucidate and guide its own program evaluation, the Commission looks at various supporting documents explaining program implementation features specific to a given college context. These documents enable it to verify various aspects of a program of study before reaching its decision. Supporting documents may be: those which the college *must transmit* to the Commission, and those which the college may make available to the Commission and lists in the appendix to its report.

The supporting documents required by the Commission are indicated in the individual guide for the program being evaluated. They may include factual data on the student population, results of surveys conducted on students or graduates, polls of employers or the university community, in-house policies, course outlines, examinations, minutes from meetings, etc.

Chapter 3
Visiting the College

The visit to the college is essential to the evaluation process as it initiates dialogue between the Commission and college representatives involved in implementing the program. Since program evaluation by independent specialists is a new experience for most colleges, the Commission would like to provide further details on how a standard visit is prepared and conducted.

1. Preparation of the visit

The content of the self-evaluation report and the nature of the program itself will influence the preparation of the college visit. For example, analysis of the self-evaluation report and the importance attached to specific program characteristics (i.e. use of laboratories, specialized equipment, or training sessions) may elicit questions or call for a visit to the premises where the program's learning activities are carried out.

The Commission begins by ensuring that the self-evaluation report and documents submitted by the college are *clear and complete, based on reliable, valid data, and include the required supporting documents.* This analysis will enable the Commission to determine whether the report contains all the information and data necessary, as well as the answers to the questions in the individual evaluation guide. The Commission also verifies the accuracy of the college's statistics.

This preliminary program analysis enables the Commission to :

- compile a list of elements which appear to require further verification;
- identify those aspects of the program which appear to function satisfactorily, less satisfactorily, or need reviewing in greater detail;
- analyze the content, rationale and bases of the program evaluation conclusions reached by the college;
- compile a list of questions to be asked when visiting the college;

- identify the premises (e.g. laboratories) and specialized equipment (e.g. computers) which it intends to examine on-site.

2. The visit

The Commission and the college agree on a date and time for the visit, the people to meet, topics and duration of the meetings, visits of particular premises, etc.

In general, a commissioner or his/her representative and a few members of the advisory committee visit the college. The visit usually lasts between one and three days, depending on the scope of the program, the content of the self-evaluation report, the questions asked by the Commission, the equipment it wishes to check, etc. These individuals are accompanied by a research officer from the Commission.

Chapter 4
The Evaluation Report

1. The preliminary report

Following the visit to the college, the Commission writes a preliminary program evaluation report and forwards it to the college. The college reads it and notes any factual errors or significant omissions which may have prevented the Commission from clearly understanding the situation.

At this point, the college submits its comments to the Commission and, where applicable, informs it of what it has done or plans to do to enhance the program's quality or relevance.

After receiving the college's input, the Commission prepares and adopts its final evaluation report for the program of study in question. This report contains the Commission's comments and its decision.

2. The Commission's decision

The Commission makes a final decision on *the implementation of programs leading to the DEC* and on *the objectives, standards and implementation of programs leading to an AEC.* This decision is expressed as follows :

1) **The program is satisfactory**. The program meets the criteria set by the Commission satisfactorily. The Commission may make any *suggestions* for improvement it deems relevant. *The college is not obliged to follow up on these suggestions, but the Commission would like to know whether it plans to.*

2) **The program is partially satisfactory**. The program does not satisfactorily meet some of the criteria set by the Commission and has shortcomings which may significantly affect the quality or relevance of the education offered. To remedy the situation, the Commission makes *recommendations* which the college must follow up on within a time period defined by the Commission. *The college must follow up on the Commission's recommendations.* If it does not make the recommended changes,

or does so unsatisfactorily in the Commission's eyes, the latter may pronounce the following decision.

3) **The program is unsatisfactory**. Since the program evaluation raised serious problems, *the Commission recommends that the Minister suspend or withdraw authorization to offer the program.* This decision may apply in two cases:

   a) the program was deemed partially satisfactory by the Commission, and the college failed to follow up on the Commission's recommendations to improve it within the prescribed time period;

   b) the program has serious shortcomings which affect the quality of the education offered.

3. Publication of the evaluation report

The Commission forwards a copy of its final program evaluation report to the college and to the Minister. It makes the results of this report public as it deems appropriate.

After having sent the evaluation reports for a given program to all colleges concerned, the Commission generally issues a final report on the program. This document includes an overall analysis of the program's status within the college network, a brief commentary on its status in each college and, where applicable, recommendations to improve its overall quality and relevance. This final report is widely distributed by the Commission.